

An Inaugural Dissertation
On

Cholera Infantum

Submitted to the examination of the

Rev. John Andrews, D.D. Provost.

The Trustees and Medical Faculty of the University
of Pennsylvania.

For the Degree of Doctor of Medicine.

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My object in this Essay, is to give a brief view
of the cause, and symptoms of the Cholera Infantum;
and to mention those remedies that have been found
most effectual in curing the disease. It is a circum-
stance no less melancholy than true, that many
hundreds fall victims to this disease each season.
To be satisfied of this, it will only be necessary to ex-
amine the bills of mortality, published in the months
of July, August and September, the months in which
this disease commonly prevails, and we cannot but
be sensibly impressed with the formidable nature
of the complaint, whose ravages are so great, and
alarming. Why, I ask is this fatality? Is it because
the name only, and not the grade of the disease is
prescribed for? Or is it because the practitioner is

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not called soon enough, and of course cannot attack the disease in its forming state or incipient state, at which time it might probably in all instances be overcome with very little trouble? As this disease has frequently been the subject of dissertations of this kind, and as so excellent an account of its cause & cure has been given by the venerable professor of the practice, in the University of Pennsylvania, in one of his volumes, that a mere repetition of what has been already said, may perhaps seem superfluous; nevertheless there are one or two circumstances, which now and then occur in this disease, which I do not find taken notice of by any person who has given an account of the complaint, and which without being attended to by the practitioner, could not be successfully treated. As no better history of its symptoms can be given than has been done in the

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work mentioned above by Dr Rush, I hope I shall be-
cessed for taking this account of them from it in his own
words. He says then "That its frequency and danger
are always in proportion to the heat of the weather.
It affects children from the first or second week after their
birth till they are two years old. It sometimes begins
with a diarrhoea, which continues for several days with-
out any other symptom of indisposition, but it more
frequently comes on with a violent vomiting and pur-
ging and a high fever. The matter discharged from
the stomach and bowels is generally yellow or green,
but the stools are sometimes slimy and bloody without
any tincture of bile. In some instances they are nearly
aslimpied as water. Worms are frequently discharged
in each kind of the stools that has been described.
The children in this stage of the disease appear to

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suffer a good deal of pain. They draw up their feet and are never easy in one posture. The pulse is quick & weak. The head is unusually warm, while the extremities retain their natural heat or incline to be cold. The fever is of the remitting kind, and discovers evident exacerbations, especially in the evenings. The disease affects the head so much, as in some instances to produce symptoms not only of delirium, but of mania, inasmuch that the children throw their heads backwards and forwards, and sometimes make attempts to scratch, and to bite their parents, nurses, and even themselves.

A swelling frequently occurs in the abdomen, and in the face and limbs. An intense thirst attends every stage of the disease. The eyes appear languid and hollow, and the children generally sleep with them half closed. Such is the insensibility of the system in some

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instances in this disease, that flies have been seen to alight upon the eyes when open, without exciting a motion in the eyelids to remove them. I saw a patient in this complaint, who was seized with something like coma every day about 3 O'clock; its occurrence was prevented by large doses of castor oil and blisters to the ankles. The Doctor then says "sometimes the vomiting continues without the purging, but more generally the purging continues without the vomiting through the whole course of the disease. The stools are frequently large and extremely fetid, but in some instances they are without smell, and resemble drinks and elements which have been taken into the body. The disease is sometimes fatal in a few days. I once saw it carry off a child in four and twenty hours. Its duration is varied by the season of the year, and by

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the changes in the temperature of the weather". I have⁶
seen one case where the disease appeared to be pro-
tracted by the state of the mother's bowels; she had
a diarrhoea with which the complaint of the child
always sympathized; i.e. it corresponded with
the state of the mother's bowels in every aggravation
or diminution of her complaint, and finally un-
cured until the mother had recovered. I shall
not attempt to explain this curious fact, but merely
mention it, that in all tedious cases an enquiry may
be made respecting the state of the mother's bowels.
I will observe however, that it is denied by some author
that the child at the breast is or can be affected by any
disordered state of the mother or nurse like the above; but
this is proved to my satisfaction to be erroneous by
Dr. Barton, in his ingenious and interesting lectures

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on milk and the case mentioned above tends also
to confirm the opinion. Dr. Rush then observes "A cool
day frequently abates its violence, and disposes it to
a favourable termination. It often continues, with
occasional variations in its appearance, for six weeks
or two months." This disease has very erroneously by
vign. ascribed to several causes, such as dentition, worms
&c. That it is owing to worms is proved to be erroneous
by dissection when the disease has terminated fatally,
there being in many cases no worms found in the
intestines. If dentition is the cause, why does it not
occur at every season of the year? It is well known
that the disease most frequently occurs at those
seasons of the year when bilious fevers prevail in
adults; it may therefore in my opinion be considered
as a modification of those diseases, affecting children.

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differently only because their predispositions are different. According to the arrangement of disease then as it affects different systems, we would call it an intestinal state of fever; this being admitted, the treatment will not be so difficult. As we find this disease appearing with greater malignancy in some seasons than in others, we would attribute this in some measure to an inflammatory constitution of the atmosphere and as this will influence the disease considerably, in proportion as it prevails, so will the disease be more or less of an inflammatory nature, which will probably in many instances require blood to be drawn. The quantity of bile poured into the intestines must irritate them powerfully, particularly as they are so very irritable at this time. It is well known that what Dr. Rush calls the alimentary predisposition

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generally prevails in young children, now I suppose
this system being more debilitated at this time of life
and made more so by the unproductive fruits of the season
is particularly liable to take on disease. From the
large quantity of bile generally discharged, it would
appear that warm weather produced a more co-
pious secretion of that fluid, and probably also
rendering it more acrid, which being poured into
the intestines, produces the disagreeable symptoms
mentioned above. Our first object then should be to
get rid of this superabundant quantity of bile. This
is best effected by mild doses of *Sulph. emetic* or sul-
phate of zinc given in very small quantities and
repeated as occasion may require. Gentle purges
should also be exhibited, but care should be taken
least the patient be too much exhausted by this

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unnecessarily; the only object being to discharge the
offending matter in the intestines. Castor oil I believe
is the best medicine of this kind that can be given; there
is however sometimes great difficulty in getting our little
patients to take this medicine. We should then have
recourse to calomel, rhubarb, manna or some other
cathartic of the kind. Elysters have done great service
in this disease combined with a little Laudanum. When
we are persuaded that the undulating contents of the bowels
are discharged, and the inflammatory symptoms abated
we should then compress the stomach and bowels by
means of a little Laudanum given in the cretaceous
julep; but frequently after the operation of the opium
and other medicines are over, it happens that the dis-
ease shews a disposition to return. In these cases the
repetition of the opiates should if necessary be continued

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for several days. In some cases this medicine cures
the disease, without the assistance of any other remedy;
when however this is not the case, it mitigates the
pain & relieves other distressing symptoms; also in
the last stage of the complaint, when hope is almost
extinguished very large doses of laudanum has, as it
relieved the little sufferers from the very pangs of death.
The warm bath has been recommended to ease pain.
The plentiful exhibition of mild delicents have a very
good effect in this disease, and from the debility in-
duced by it, it is generally necessary after the more vi-
olent and inflammatory symptoms have abated, to have
recourse to Tonic and cordial medicines. The bark may
then be exhibited and the little patients should be per-
mitted to take a little salted meat, and other articles
of a Tonic nature, paying great attention at the same

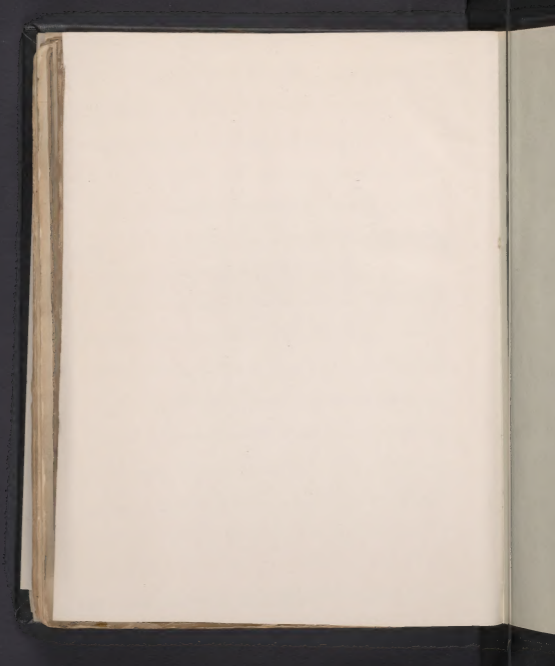
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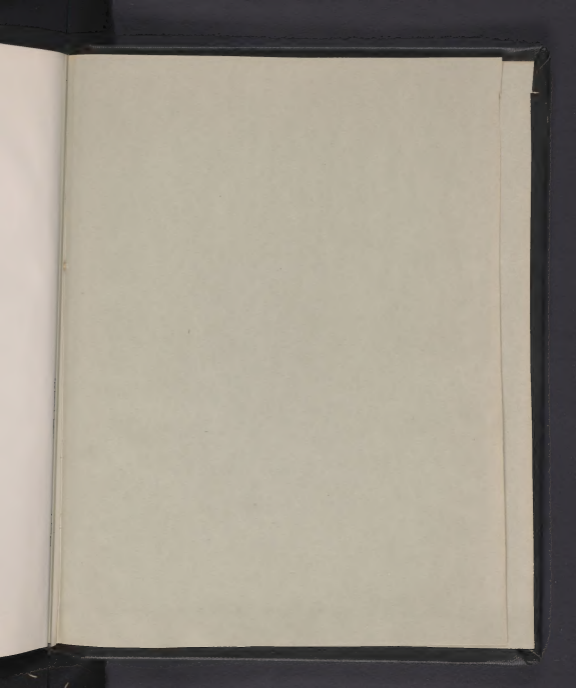
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time to the system, that it be not again thrown into morbid action. Dr Barton in his lectures says, that the *geranium maculatum* has been used in this disease with advantage, at the same time observing that acrids are too much neglected in this complaint; but the professor does not omit cautioning against the use of them, and particularly the more stimulating ones, when there is much inflammatory diathesis present. The manner in which this medicine is prepared & exhibited is by boiling the root in milk and let the patient take it ad libitum. Dr Rush says he has found the greatest benefit from country air; our little patients then should, if it is practicable be ordered into the country when the season has arrived favourable to the production of bilious & other fevers and more particularly when the weather is very warm.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from a 17th or 18th-century manuscript. The text is arranged in approximately 15 horizontal lines across the page. The ink is dark, and the paper shows signs of age, including discoloration and wear along the edges. The handwriting is fluid and characteristic of the period.







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